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PRIORITY

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FOREIGN SERVICE DESPATCH

FROM : Ambassador TERNUCI PALP.

TO : THE DEPARTMENT OF STATE, WASHINGTON.

REF : Embassy Airgram G-17, Sept. 13 and Embtel 220, Sept. 11, 1960

87
DESP. NO.

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September 13, 1960
DATE

28 SEP 1960

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SUBJECT: Swan Islands

The Embassy wishes to leave no possibility of doubt in the Department's mind as to the wide divergence of the Honduran view of the Swan Island issue from the Department's view. The two views of the problem are not even in the same context. The published expression of the Honduran Government's view was forwarded in Embassy airgram G-17 of September 13. Enclosed is a dispassionate expression of the National Party view from the pen of former Foreign Minister and Ambassador Jorge Fidel DURON, long known for his friendship for the United States. The Department will observe that there is, in fact, oratory aside, little difference between these two views.

A more earthy expression of the same Honduran view is that expressed to me orally by the Honduran Foreign Minister on September 10, 1960, that, after settlement of the sovereignty question, Honduras would have no objection to continued United States use of the Islands for any legitimate purpose--at a price. My continued forceful insistence in this and other appropriate official conversations on the United States position as succinctly stated in the Department's telegram 73 has been accepted courteously, but as though it were in the nature of an evasion of reality.

All these expressions of the Honduran views, along with that of the National Party-led Student Federation (Embtel 220, September 11), share the conviction that there are in reality not two sides to the question. For Hondurans who might doubt this point, reference to Section 2 of Article 6 of the Honduran Constitution resolves the matter out of hand.

In the circumstances, the Department may wish to consider the subject from a political as well as from a legal point of view. In the present temper of Honduran public sentiment, not to discuss the subject of the Swan Islands with Honduras at all might be preferable to discussing it with a view to insisting upon the legitimacy of the United States' claim to sovereignty in the Islands. An unsuccessful denouement of a Honduran official discussion of the Swan Islands dispute would, in this Embassy's opinion, result in grave consequences to the stability of the present

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From Tegucigalpa

Honduran administration, and to the public image of the United States in Honduras.

Albert B. Franklin
Albert B. Franklin

Chargé d'Affaires ad interim

Enclosure:

"Our Position on the Swan Islands"
by Jorge Fidel DURON, from
El Día of Sept. 12, 1960.

cc OAP

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Translation of article appearing in
El Día, Tegucigalpa, Sept. 12, 1960

Our Position on the Swan Islands

by Jorge Fidel Durón

First of all I condemn those among our leftists who are attempting to inject and project the Swan Islands problem for the purpose of molesting and disturbing the United States Government at this time according to a preconceived plan to exacerbate world-wide problems that prevail in many places, but particularly in the Congo and the Caribbean.

Our Swan Islands problem must be studied carefully and thoughtfully. We should take care not to judge by superficial appearances, nor credit arguments connected with the Communist conspiracy. It simply must be realized that no one can dispute our claim and our sovereignty over our island territory. As a sample of our argument, here is a detail: if they wish to argue that we Hondurans have been careless about the Islands, it must be remembered that when the Military Junta organized the Department of Gracias a Dios, at a time when there was no dispute or discussion on this subject, it described the jurisdiction of that Department as "from Punta Patuca northward following the meridian of Punta Patuca to a point which will include the Swan Islands, etc."

In the negotiations which were carried out in 1921 the Government of Honduras had already made it clear to the United States that it would not accept any doubt as to its sovereignty over those Islands nor admit that acts of appropriation should be committed in them since they belong to the national territory and nothing contrary to territorial rights would be tolerated. Those negotiations left the door open for diplomatic discussion which can be carried out in any way and through any channel agreed upon by the parties.

The truth of the matter is, I believe, that there is no room for discussion over incontestable and incontrovertible rights. As my father, Dr. Rómulo DURÓN, said, in the course of one of his great services to his fatherland, Honduras: "In the United States Government's note in which it is stated that American citizens discovered the Islands and held full possession of them from that time onward, it is implicitly recognized that the said Islands do not belong to the United States of America since in the note it also is stated that 'in that Government's judgment a satisfactory arrangement of the dispute between the two governments would be more easily arrived at if the Honduran Government should abstain from any attempt to take possession of the Islands, maintaining in this way the status quo.'"

And with all logic Dr. Durón (the father of the author) ends as follows: "If the United States were trying to defend the claim that the Swan Islands are United States territory, they would not have proposed the arrangement offered in their note." If our Islands are in the orbit which is indispensable to the inter-

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American system for the continental security and defense of that system, Honduras will never stand in the way of their serving this purpose as they have in the past also served as a base for obtaining scientific meteorological information. But it must be known that they are ours and that they have been ours ever since their discovery by Spain.

With respect to Honduras, this is what the powerful United States might do so that, in the words of John Kennedy, "people all over the world might feel that the American giant is on the move, that the great American melting pot is again boiling and that our country is again moving forward"; they might generously and gallantly recognize our rights as they have done in the past in the Philippines and in Puerto Rico. This is how to live in peace with justice and freedom.

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